Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1-46 (Canceled)

47. (Currently amended) A polynucleotide comprising a coding sequence for ~~the~~ a multiple epitope fusion antigen ~~of claim 44~~ comprising the amino acid sequence depicted in Figures 7A-7F, or an amino acid sequence with at least 80% sequence identity thereto which reacts specifically with anti-HCV antibodies present in a biological sample from an HCV-infected individual.

48. (Currently amended) A polynucleotide comprising a coding sequence for ~~the~~ a multiple epitope fusion antigen ~~of claim 45~~ comprising the amino acid sequence depicted in Figures 7A-7F, or an amino acid sequence with at least 90% sequence identity thereto which reacts specifically with anti-HCV antibodies present in a biological sample from an HCV-infected individual.

49. (Currently amended) A polynucleotide comprising a coding sequence for ~~the~~ a multiple epitope fusion antigen ~~of claim 46~~ consisting of the amino acid sequence depicted in Figures 5A-5F.

50. (Original) A recombinant vector comprising:

(a) a polynucleotide according to claim 47;

(b) and control elements operably linked to said polynucleotide whereby the coding sequence can be transcribed and translated in a host cell.

51. (Original) A recombinant vector comprising:

(a) a polynucleotide according to claim 48;

(b) and control elements operably linked to said polynucleotide whereby the coding sequence can be transcribed and translated in a host cell.

52. (Original) A recombinant vector comprising:

(a) a polynucleotide according to claim 49;

(b) and control elements operably linked to said polynucleotide whereby the coding sequence can be transcribed and translated in a host cell.

53. (Original) A host cell transformed with the recombinant vector of claim 50.

54. (Original) A host cell transformed with the recombinant vector of claim 51.

55. (Original) A host cell transformed with the recombinant vector of claim 52.

56. (Original) A method of producing a recombinant multiple epitope fusion antigen comprising:

(a) providing a population of host cells according to claim 53; and

(b) culturing said population of cells under conditions whereby the multiple epitope fusion antigen encoded by the coding sequence present in said recombinant vector is expressed.

57. (Original) A method of producing a recombinant multiple epitope fusion antigen comprising:

(a) providing a population of host cells according to claim 54; and

(b) culturing said population of cells under conditions whereby the multiple epitope fusion antigen encoded by the coding sequence present in said recombinant vector is expressed.

58. (Original) A method of producing a recombinant multiple epitope fusion antigen comprising:

(a) providing a population of host cells according to claim 55; and

(b) culturing said population of cells under conditions whereby the multiple epitope fusion antigen encoded by the coding sequence present in said recombinant vector is expressed.